

the condition of education 2002



INDICATOR 18

12th-Graders' Effort and Interest in School

The indicator and corresponding tables are taken directly from *The Condition of Education 2002*. Therefore, the page numbers may not be sequential.

Additional information about the survey data and supplementary notes can be found in the full report. For a copy of *The Condition of Education 2002*, visit the NCES web site (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2002025>) or contact ED PUBs at 1-877-4ED-PUBS.

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NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement

Student Effort

12th-Graders' Effort and Interest in School

Over the past 2 decades, 12th-graders have reported a declining interest in school, while the effort they apply to their school work has generally shown no measurable change over the past decade.

Many reforms of the past 2 decades have attempted to increase high school students' effort and interest in their education (National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983; Newmann 1992). Despite such attempts, seniors' valuation of their learning activities and self-reports on their efforts do not indicate that higher proportions are more engaged in their school work or trying harder than in years past.

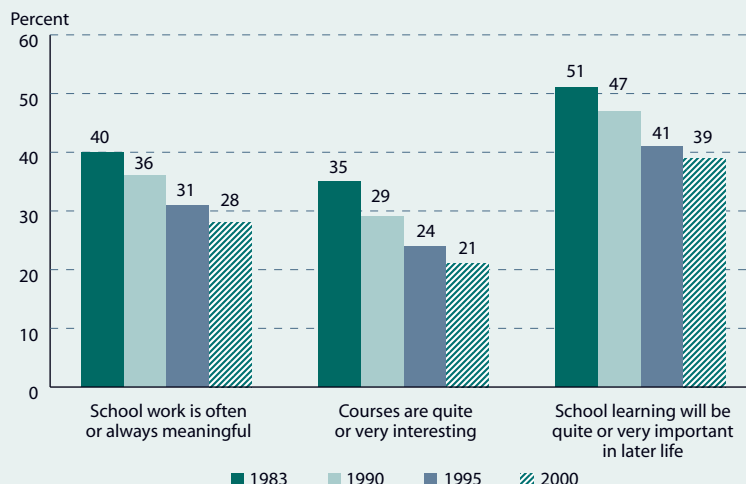
Indeed, 12th-graders' interest in school exhibited a decline from 1983 to 2000. For example, while 40 percent of 1983 seniors said their school work was "often or always meaningful," 28 percent gave this response in 2000. Similarly, the proportion of seniors who said most of their courses were "quite or very interesting" dropped from 35 percent to 21 percent, and the percentage who said what they were learning in school will be "quite or very important later in life" also declined. Even seniors who reported earning mostly A's decreased their ratings of school work's meaningfulness and how important this learning would be later in life. In addition, students became more likely to take a dim view of school courses over this period: 32 percent of seniors in 2000 said that

most of their courses were "very or slightly dull," up from 20 percent in 1983 (see supplemental table 18-1).

In contrast to these changes, three measures related to student effort have generally shown no measurable change since 1990. (Data on these three measures were first collected in 1989.) The proportion of seniors who said they "often or always try to do their best work" remained between 61 and 65 percent. The percentage who reported they "seldom or never fail to complete/hand in school assignments" held steady at roughly 60 percent, and 35–38 percent in 1990, 1995, and 2000 said they "seldom or never fool around in class" (see supplemental table 18-2).

Few notable differences appeared between high school seniors in academic and vocational/technical programs in 2000 on measures related to interest and effort in school. However, while about 70 percent of seniors in an academic program in 2000 said they seldom or never fail to complete school assignments, fewer vocational/technical program seniors (50 percent) responded in this way.

INTEREST IN SCHOOL: Percentage of 12th-graders who expressed various opinions about their school experience: 1983, 1990, 1995, and 2000



NOTE: The data do not meet NCES standards for response rates.

SOURCE: University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research. Monitoring the Future 12th-Grade Study: 1983, 1990, 1995, and 2000.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Supplemental Note 6
Supplemental Tables 18-1,
18-2

National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983;
Newmann 1992



12th-Graders' Effort and Interest in School

Table 18-1 Percentage distributions of 12th-graders according to their ratings of school work's meaningfulness, courses' degree of interest, and the importance of their school learning in later life, by sex, high school program, and average grades: 1983, 1990, 1995, and 2000

Student characteristics	How often school work is meaningful			How interesting most courses are			How important school learning will be in later life		
	Seldom or never	Sometimes	Often or always	Very or slightly dull	Fairly interesting	Quite or very interesting	Not or slightly important	Fairly important	Quite or very important
Total	18.3	41.5	40.2	19.8	45.5	34.6	19.9	29.6	50.5
1983									
Sex									
Male	22.2	40.9	36.8	22.7	45.1	32.2	22.4	29.5	48.1
Female	14.8	41.8	43.4	17.3	45.6	37.1	17.8	29.7	52.5
High school program ¹									
Academic/college-prep	13.1	41.0	45.9	18.1	42.9	39.0	16.6	29.0	54.4
General	23.4	42.6	33.9	23.1	49.3	27.5	26.5	31.2	42.3
Vocational/technical	19.0	44.6	36.5	15.9	43.2	40.9	15.6	26.2	58.2
Average grades in high school ²									
As	11.2	36.3	52.5	14.5	37.5	48.0	14.9	26.0	59.2
Bs	16.6	43.8	39.6	17.1	47.5	35.4	16.7	30.6	52.7
C's or D's	25.5	40.8	33.7	27.9	47.8	24.2	28.9	30.6	40.4
Total	20.0	44.5	35.5	24.6	46.7	28.7	20.7	32.3	47.0
1990									
Sex									
Male	21.1	44.9	34.1	26.4	46.1	27.4	21.6	30.7	47.7
Female	18.6	44.5	36.9	22.1	47.8	30.2	19.4	34.3	46.3
High school program ¹									
Academic/college-prep	17.9	46.1	35.9	22.4	48.1	29.4	18.8	34.9	46.3
General	23.1	45.7	31.2	28.8	48.0	23.2	24.5	31.9	43.6
Vocational/technical	22.9	37.3	39.8	21.7	41.1	37.3	16.1	25.8	58.1
Average grades in high school ²									
As	18.1	41.2	40.8	19.8	45.5	34.7	17.6	30.8	51.6
Bs	18.1	45.1	36.8	20.8	48.1	31.1	17.8	34.0	48.2
C's or D's	25.3	46.3	28.5	35.6	45.8	18.6	28.8	31.0	40.1
Total	23.7	45.4	30.9	29.0	47.2	23.8	23.7	34.9	41.4
1995									
Sex									
Male	26.6	43.7	29.7	31.4	44.0	24.6	24.5	33.1	42.3
Female	20.4	47.7	31.9	26.4	50.6	23.0	22.6	37.0	40.4
High school program ¹									
Academic/college-prep	20.4	46.7	33.0	25.7	47.8	26.5	20.6	36.9	42.6
General	28.4	47.3	24.4	35.1	50.5	14.4	28.9	34.2	36.9
Vocational/technical	29.6	39.1	31.3	27.2	41.6	31.1	24.5	26.8	48.7
Average grades in high school ²									
As	18.6	44.2	37.2	22.2	48.0	29.9	20.0	35.1	44.9
Bs	22.9	47.3	29.8	27.8	48.3	23.9	22.9	35.2	41.9
C's or D's	33.0	42.7	24.2	42.2	43.6	14.2	31.4	33.9	34.7

See footnotes at end of table.

12th-Graders' Effort and Interest in School

Table 18-1 Percentage distributions of 12th-graders according to their ratings of school work's meaningfulness, courses' degree of interest, and the importance of their school learning in later life, by sex, high school program, and average grades: 1983, 1990, 1995, and 2000—Continued

Student characteristics	How often school work is meaningful			How interesting most courses are			How important school learning will be in later life		
	Seldom or never	Sometimes	Often or always	Very or slightly dull	Fairly interesting	Quite or very interesting	Not or slightly important	Fairly important	Quite or very important
Total	26.6	44.9	28.5	31.9	46.9	21.2	26.5	34.3	39.2
Sex									
Male	31.3	40.8	27.9	35.2	43.9	20.9	28.5	32.2	39.2
Female	22.4	48.9	28.7	29.0	49.3	21.7	24.9	35.9	39.3
High school program ¹									
Academic/college-prep	22.2	47.9	29.9	27.6	49.2	23.3	24.1	35.9	40.0
General	31.7	44.4	23.9	38.5	46.2	15.2	30.8	34.2	35.0
Vocational/technical	31.0	38.6	30.4	31.2	40.1	28.7	23.8	33.2	43.0
Average grades in high school ²									
A's	20.7	45.0	34.3	24.1	48.3	27.7	24.8	34.4	40.8
B's	27.0	47.3	25.8	31.6	48.3	20.1	25.4	35.4	39.2
C's or D's	35.4	39.7	24.9	45.5	40.7	13.8	31.4	32.7	35.9

¹Respondents in a category labeled "Other/don't know," not shown separately, are included in the totals.

²Categories were made from students' reports of their average grade in high school.

NOTE: The data do not meet NCES standards for response rates. Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

SOURCE: University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research. Monitoring the Future 12th-Grade Study: 1983, 1990, 1995, and 2000.

12th-Graders' Effort and Interest in School

Table 18-2 Percentage distributions of 12th-graders according to frequency of engaging in three activities related to effort in school, by sex, high school program, and average grades: 1990, 1995, and 2000

Student characteristics	Try to do best work			Fool around in class			Fail to complete/hand in assignments		
	Seldom or never	Sometimes	Often or always	Seldom or never	Sometimes	Often or always	Seldom or never	Sometimes	Often or always
1990									
Total	9.4	29.9	60.7	34.6	36.4	28.9	58.7	29.1	12.2
Sex									
Male	12.9	34.1	53.0	27.7	36.3	36.0	50.5	33.1	16.5
Female	4.9	25.3	69.8	43.3	36.0	20.8	68.5	24.7	6.8
High school program ¹									
Academic/college-prep	8.6	26.8	64.6	36.0	36.9	27.1	65.8	25.2	9.0
General	10.5	35.3	54.2	31.3	38.8	29.9	51.6	33.8	14.6
Vocational/technical	8.1	30.8	61.2	32.6	34.4	33.0	53.5	29.3	17.2
Average grades in high school ²									
As	4.4	13.7	81.9	40.7	35.7	23.6	81.9	13.9	4.2
Bs	6.9	28.5	64.6	36.4	35.5	28.1	64.8	27.3	7.9
C's or D's	17.1	43.4	39.5	26.4	38.9	34.7	33.2	42.9	24.0
1995									
Total	9.3	27.1	63.6	38.1	34.0	27.9	59.4	28.5	12.1
Sex									
Male	13.1	32.4	54.5	27.3	34.2	38.5	51.3	33.7	15.1
Female	5.7	22.1	72.3	47.8	34.0	18.1	67.1	23.9	9.0
High school program ¹									
Academic/college-prep	6.6	24.2	69.2	39.3	35.7	25.0	66.4	24.6	9.0
General	11.8	32.5	55.7	35.1	32.7	32.3	50.4	32.1	17.6
Vocational/technical	10.7	25.6	63.6	34.4	33.6	32.0	55.2	34.0	10.8
Average grades in high school ²									
As	2.9	14.3	82.8	46.3	31.1	22.6	82.1	13.9	4.0
Bs	8.2	28.2	63.6	37.0	36.4	26.6	59.5	32.8	7.7
C's or D's	19.8	41.4	38.8	29.2	32.0	38.8	31.6	35.7	32.7
2000									
Total	8.7	26.0	65.3	36.2	34.4	29.4	60.5	29.2	10.3
Sex									
Male	12.3	32.2	55.5	25.1	36.7	38.3	49.9	35.4	14.7
Female	5.2	20.2	74.7	45.9	33.5	20.6	70.9	23.3	5.8
High school program ¹									
Academic/college-prep	8.0	21.7	70.3	37.3	34.3	28.4	69.1	23.2	7.7
General	10.7	31.6	57.7	33.2	34.3	32.4	50.4	38.2	11.4
Vocational/technical	7.7	24.9	67.4	31.8	41.3	26.8	49.2	33.1	17.7
Average grades in high school ²									
As	4.5	14.3	81.2	39.4	36.7	23.9	81.4	16.3	2.3
Bs	9.2	26.4	64.4	36.2	33.1	30.7	59.7	31.1	9.2
C's or D's	13.4	42.3	44.3	27.4	36.7	35.9	31.9	43.8	24.3

¹Respondents in a category labeled "Other/don't know," not shown separately, are included in the totals.

²Categories were made from students' reports of their average grade in high school.

NOTE: The data do not meet NCES standards for response rates. Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

SOURCE: University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research. Monitoring the Future 12th-Grade Study: 1990, 1995, and 2000.

12th-Graders' Effort and Interest in School

Table S18 Standard errors for the percentage of 12th-graders who expressed various opinions about their school experience: 1983, 1990, 1995, and 2000

Year	School work is often or always meaningful	Courses are quite or very interesting	School learning will be quite/ very important in later life
1983	1.2	1.1	1.2
1990	1.0	0.9	1.0
1995	0.9	0.9	1.0
2000	1.0	0.9	1.1

SOURCE: University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research. Monitoring the Future 12th-Grade Study: 1983, 1990, 1995, and 2000.

12th-Graders' Effort and Interest in School

Table S18-1 Standard errors for the percentage distributions of 12th-graders according to their ratings of school work's meaningfulness, courses' degree of interest, and the importance of their school learning in later life, by sex, high school program, and average grades: 1983, 1990, 1995, and 2000

Student characteristics	How often school work is meaningful			How interesting most courses are			How important school learning will be in later life		
	Seldom or never	Sometimes	Often or always	Very or slightly dull	Fairly interesting	Quite or very interesting	Not or slightly important	Fairly important	Quite or very important
1983									
Total	0.9	1.2	1.2	1.0	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.2
Sex									
Male	1.3	1.6	1.6	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.3	1.5	1.6
Female	1.1	1.5	1.6	1.2	1.6	1.5	1.2	1.4	1.6
High school program									
Academic/college-prep	1.1	1.6	1.6	1.2	1.6	1.6	1.2	1.5	1.6
General	1.6	1.9	1.8	1.6	1.9	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.9
Vocational/technical	2.3	2.9	2.8	2.2	2.9	2.9	2.1	2.6	2.9
Average grades in high school									
A's	1.5	2.4	2.4	1.7	2.4	2.4	1.7	2.1	2.4
B's	1.2	1.6	1.5	1.2	1.6	1.5	1.2	1.4	1.6
C's or D's	1.7	2.0	1.9	1.8	2.0	1.7	1.8	1.9	2.0
1990									
Total	0.8	1.0	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.8	1.0	1.0
Sex									
Male	1.1	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.3
Female	1.0	1.3	1.3	1.1	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.3
High school program									
Academic/college-prep	1.0	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.2	1.0	1.2	1.3
General	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.6
Vocational/technical	2.2	2.5	2.5	2.1	2.5	2.5	1.9	2.2	2.5
Average grades in high school									
A's	1.5	1.9	1.9	1.5	1.9	1.8	1.5	1.8	1.9
B's	1.0	1.3	1.2	1.0	1.3	1.2	1.0	1.2	1.3
C's or D's	1.5	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.3	1.6	1.6	1.7
1995									
Total	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0
Sex									
Male	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.3
Female	1.0	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.3
High school program									
Academic/college-prep	1.0	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.2	1.2
General	1.6	1.7	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.2	1.6	1.6	1.7
Vocational/technical	2.6	2.8	2.6	2.5	2.8	2.6	2.4	2.5	2.8
Average grades in high school									
A's	1.3	1.6	1.6	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.3	1.6	1.6
B's	1.1	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.3
C's or D's	1.9	1.9	1.7	1.9	1.9	1.4	1.8	1.8	1.9

See footnotes at end of table.

12th-Graders' Effort and Interest in School

Table S18-1 Standard errors for the percentage distributions of 12th-graders according to their ratings of school work's meaningfulness, courses' degree of interest, and the importance of their school learning in later life, by sex, high school program, and average grades: 1983, 1990, 1995, and 2000—Continued

Student characteristics	How often school work is meaningful			How interesting most courses are			How important school learning will be in later life		
	Seldom or never	Sometimes	Often or always	Very or slightly dull	Fairly interesting	Quite or very interesting	Not or slightly important	Fairly important	Quite or very important
2000									
Total	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.1	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.1
Sex									
Male	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.4
Female	1.2	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.4
High school program									
Academic/college-prep	1.2	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.4
General	1.7	1.8	1.5	1.7	1.8	1.3	1.6	1.7	1.7
Vocational/technical	2.9	3.0	2.9	2.9	3.1	2.8	2.7	2.9	3.1
Average grades in high school									
As	1.4	1.7	1.7	1.5	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.7	1.7
Bs	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.4
C's or D's	2.1	2.1	1.9	2.2	2.1	1.5	2.0	2.0	2.1

SOURCE: University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research. Monitoring the Future 12th-Grade Study: 1983, 1990, 1995, and 2000.

12th-Graders' Effort and Interest in School

Table S18-2 Standard errors for the percentage distributions of 12th-graders according to frequency of engaging in three activities related to effort in school, by sex, high school program, and average grades: 1990, 1995, and 2000

Student characteristics	Try to do best work			Fool around in class			Fail to complete/ hand in assignments		
	Seldom or never	Sometimes	Often or always	Seldom or never	Sometimes	Often or always	Seldom or never	Sometimes	Often or always
1990									
Total	0.7	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.2	0.8
Sex									
Male	1.1	1.6	1.7	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.2
Female	0.8	1.5	1.6	1.8	1.7	1.4	1.7	1.5	0.9
High school program									
Academic/college-prep	1.0	1.5	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.0
General	1.3	2.0	2.1	2.0	2.1	1.9	2.1	2.0	1.5
Vocational/technical	1.9	3.2	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.5	3.2	2.6
Average grades in high school									
A's	1.1	1.8	2.1	2.6	2.6	2.3	2.1	1.9	1.1
B's	0.9	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.6	1.5	0.9
C's or D's	1.7	2.2	2.1	1.9	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.2	1.9
1995									
Total	0.7	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.1	0.8
Sex									
Male	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.3
Female	0.8	1.4	1.5	1.7	1.6	1.3	1.6	1.4	1.0
High school program									
Academic/college-prep	0.8	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.4	1.6	1.4	0.9
General	1.5	2.1	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.3	2.1	1.7
Vocational/technical	2.3	3.2	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.5	2.3
Average grades in high school									
A's	0.8	1.6	1.7	2.2	2.1	1.9	1.7	1.6	0.9
B's	0.9	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.7	1.6	0.9
C's or D's	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.4
2000									
Total	0.8	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.2	0.8
Sex									
Male	1.2	1.8	1.9	1.7	1.8	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.3
Female	0.8	1.5	1.6	1.8	1.7	1.5	1.7	1.5	0.9
High school program									
Academic/college-prep	1.0	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.7	1.5	1.0
General	1.5	2.2	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.4	2.3	1.5
Vocational/technical	2.3	3.7	4.0	4.0	4.2	3.8	4.3	4.0	3.3
Average grades in high school									
A's	1.0	1.6	1.8	2.3	2.2	2.0	1.8	1.7	0.7
B's	1.1	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.1
C's or D's	2.0	2.8	2.9	2.6	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.9	2.5

SOURCE: University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research. Monitoring the Future 12th-Grade Study: 1990, 1995, and 2000.